

EARLY EDUCATION IN ARIZONA – DEFINITIONS & FRAMEWORK

Definitions:

Child Care: Child care centers are operated by private profit, non-profit and faith-based organizations with licensing/certification oversight by state agency (Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Economic Security (DES) or Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Centers are usually open year-round and the hours are usually 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Child care centers may include programs for infants (birth to 1 year), toddlers (1 and 2 years of age), and preschool-age children (3-5 year olds). In Arizona, only 10% of centers are accredited, meaning they meet national standards for quality.

Early Childhood Education: (also early care and education and early education) The term commonly used to include child care, preschool, Early Head Start, and Head Start. This term may also include early intervention, and family support programs providing services and supports to families of children birth through eight years.

Early Intervention: Systems, services, and supports designed to enhance the development of young children, minimize the potential of developmental delay and need for special education services, and enhance the capacity of families as caregivers.

Family Child Care: Home-based care, not in the child's own home, purchased by the child's family and provided by an individual not related to the child. Care may be provided for children from one or several families.

Head Start and Early Head Start: Comprehensive child development programs serving children from birth to age 5, pregnant women and their families. Child-focused programs have the goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families. Program standards and funds come from the federal government; programs/grantees traditionally operate part-day programs during the school year.

Preschool: (also pre-K) Early childhood education for 3 to 5-year-old children who are not old enough for kindergarten. In Arizona, preschool can be offered in a private child care setting or in a preschool program located on a public school campus. Those on public school campuses, or in qualified private schools, are funded by state dollars (ECBG). These programs are required to meet and maintain national accreditation standards for preschool programs. These programs operate either half-day or during school hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.).

High Quality: Means children spend time with a warm and nurturing caregiver who understands child development and the varying needs of individual children. Interesting and stimulating materials and activities surround children. Children are safe, feel secure, and thrive in an environment that encourages their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

Arizona Framework:

In 2003, there were approximately 200,000 children in licensed child care in Arizona and approximately 500,000 children younger than 6 years.

There are no Arizona data on the specific type of out-of-home care used by working parents; however, national data tell us that the principal arrangements are relatives (41%), child care centers (30%), family child care settings (17%), and in-home caregivers (5%) (*Child Welfare League of America*).

Early childhood education programs in Arizona are administered by three state agencies - (Department of Health Services (DHS), Department of Economic Security (DES) or Arizona Department of Education (ADE). Head Start programs/grantees receive funding directly from the federal Department of Health & Human Services.

Department of Economic Security (DES)

Child Care: DES administers child care subsidies, contracts with and reimburses child care and early intervention providers, certifies small family child care homes, and allocates federal Quality Set Aside funds to improve the quality of child care in Arizona.

Child care subsidies are for children birth through age 12 and funded through the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families grant (TANF) and state dollars. Families eligible to receive a subsidy from the state of Arizona to cover a portion of the cost of child care include: low income families, families receiving cash assistance (TANF) to support work participation activities, employed families transitioning off of TANF, and families in special circumstances including those who are in the CPS system. Approximately 37,000 children in Arizona receive child care subsidies each month.

Families who qualify for subsidies use a voucher to pay for child care and choose from among over 7,000 contracted child care providers statewide. These providers include DES certified small family child care homes; relatives that are registered with DES; DHS licensed child care group homes (5 to 10 children in a home); or DHS licensed child care centers.

Arizona's eligibility limits allow families who have incomes of 165% or less of FPL (\$25,179 for a family of 3 or approximately \$12.20/hr) to receive a subsidy for a portion of the cost of child care. Actual payments made on behalf of eligible families are based on family size, income, number of children in care, geographic location and type of child care provider.

As families' income increases, they are required to pay a greater share of the cost of care. (CPS and TANF families are generally exempt from a required co-payment). Parent co-payments can be as high as \$365 per month or 19% of their gross income. Parents also have to pay any additional costs necessary to make up the difference between the actual child care provider charges and the amount that DES subsidy pays. The maximum DES rate paid to child care providers is set at the 75th percentile of a market rate survey conducted in 1998.

To manage within the funding appropriated by the state legislature, DES has maintained a waiting list since March 2003. Families in the low-income category are subject to the waiting list, as prescribed by state statute.

Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) regulations require that 4% of the CCDF be earmarked for activities to improve the quality of child care. These monies total approximately \$10 million and support initiatives and services such as: the School Readiness Board, Arizona's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral program, the statewide professional development registry system, provider training, enhanced rates for accredited providers, and school-aged child care program coordination (administered by GOCYF).

Early Intervention: DES is the lead agency for the state collaboration that administers the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzEIP). This program delivers early intervention services to children birth through age three years who have, or are at risk for, a developmental delay. Funding is from the US Department of Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C.

Family Support: The DES Office of Prevention administers the Healthy Families program designed to link families at risk for child abuse who have children birth through five years to home visitors and early intervention community resources in order to strengthen families and protect children. Healthy Families is funded through the TANF Block Grant funds, State Tobacco Tax, and State Parents' Commission monies.

Arizona Department of Education (ADE)

The ADE Early Childhood Division administers the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG); Preschool Special Education; Family Literacy/Even Start, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funds preschool for children that qualify for free/reduced lunch (185% FPL or \$28,231 for a family of 3 or \$13.57/hr) as well as full-day kindergarten, and supports enhancement services for K-3 children. ADE has developed the voluntary *Arizona Early Childhood Education Standards and Guidelines for Comprehensive Early Education Programs* related to child development, curriculum, and facilities for implementation in all early childhood programs. The Early Childhood Block Grant of \$19.5 million in state funds is distribution based on formula to school districts and accredited centers. Within the ECBG, 4,162 children are enrolled in preschool, 7,364 in full-day kindergarten and 64,020 in K-3 enhancements (2001/02).

Preschool Special Education provides 3- to 5- year old children who are experiencing a developmental delay to receive a "free and appropriate education." ECBG funded preschools (private or on public school campuses) must be accredited by one of 7 national accrediting bodies approved by ADE. Preschool special education is funded with federal dollars from Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). There were 9,076 enrolled in Preschool Special Education in 1999/00.

Family Literacy funds flow to contractors who provide a part-day preschool combined with adult education for families below the federal poverty level (\$15,260 for a family of 3 or \$7.33/hr) for parents without a high school diploma or GED or in need of English language skills. Family Literacy receives federal Even Start funds and \$1 million of state funds. There were 1,980 families in Family Literacy, of which 833 are preschoolers (2001/02).

Child & Adult Care Food Program provides funding for nutritious snacks and meals and training for non-profit child care programs that serve eligible children birth-12 years old, for-profit child care programs that enroll children of families eligible for the child care subsidy, children of migrant workers; and children with special needs. CACFP "alternately approves" small child care homes for those not licensed by DHS or certified by DES. ADE alternately approved sites are eligible to receive CACFP funds.

Department of Health Services (DHS)

The DHS Office of Assurance and Licensure licenses, regulates, and monitors child care centers and certifies and monitors child care group homes. Homes must be certified if child care is provided for 5 or more children that are unrelated to the provider for compensation and used on a regular basis. DHS licensing policy establishes minimum health and safety standards. Staff monitors for compliance and takes enforcement actions to ensure that the care causes no harm to children—that the building is safe and sanitary and that adequate learning experiences are provided to children.

Head Start

Head Start provides early education, most typically on a part-day basis (ex. 3 ½ hours); parent involvement, education, and family support; and comprehensive health and nutrition education for children. Early Head Start serves women who are pregnant and children birth to 3 years old. Head Start serves children 3 to 5 and their families who are at or below the federal poverty level (\$15,260 for a family of 3 or \$7.33/hr). There are 18,315 three and four year old children in Head Start (2002) and 1,217 mothers and children in Early Head Start.

The federal Department of Health & Human Services allocates Head Start dollars directly to 20 Arizona Head Start grantees (12 Native American, 7 regional & 1 Migrant). The grantees may run programs and/or allocate monies to local Head Start program contractors. Head Start programs must adhere to comprehensive standards determined by the federal Head Start Bureau.

